

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 045 684

TE 002 201

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TITLE Removing the Storm Clouds: Cooperative Leadership to Provide Constructive and Viable Solutions to Critical Problems in Education.
PUB DATE 20 Oct 70
NOTE 11p.; Tele-lecture from Lincoln, Nebraska, to Raleigh, North Carolina, for workshop on Team Supervision for the State Dept. of Education of North Carolina
EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.25 HC-\$0.65
DESCRIPTORS Activism, Articulation (Program), *Cooperative Planning, Educational Administration, Educational Change, *Educational Coordination, Educational Finance, *Educational Needs, Educational Objectives, Educational Planning, *Educational Problems, Educational Resources, Inservice Teacher Education, Instructional Materials, Specialization

ABSTRACT

Confusion in the ranks of educators must be reduced. The problems of instructional arrangements, in-service training programs, militancy, instructional resources, and overspecialization may all be met through the collective action of teachers, supervisors, and principals. In order to solve the problems facing schools and school districts because of changing cultural values, distribution of funds, and a credibility gap, schools and educators must (1) establish a cooperative leadership, (2) clarify school goals, (3) establish specific procedures for achieving goals, (4) define appropriate amounts of common and specialized learnings, (5) establish articulation patterns (level to level and subject to subject), (6) develop in-service programs peculiar to the local system, and (7) become community people not limited to school interests and contacts. (DD)

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TELE-LECTURE*

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REMOVING THE STORM CLOUDS
(Cooperative Leadership to Provide Constructive and Viable
Solutions to Critical Problems in Education)

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Introduction

There are storm clouds over the institution! The clouds get darker each year. The people who should protest against the storm and minimize the storm are not helping to quell the storm--they are increasing the potential damage.

Clouds come from every direction now. A few years ago they were coming only from the far right. Then the far left "puckered-up" with equal threats. Next parents and patrons--the middle-of-the-road type--began to wonder about the quality and significance of what schools were doing. And, finally students started to thunder from the remaining direction about a variety of things--many of which were relatively insignificant but at least as many of which were valid and cogent!

So, we find ourselves threatened from all sides. And our ranks are so disordered that we resemble the Arabs in their confusion as to who to fight against or with--or whether it really makes any difference which way we go! Such confusion in the ranks of educators must be reduced.

If we were to categorize some of the problems involved we could do so by detailing them under the problems of (1) teachers, supervisors and principals and (2) schools and school districts. A brief analysis in each category might look thus.

*Tele-lecture on October 20, 1970, from Lincoln, Nebraska, to Raleigh, North Carolina, for a workshop on Team Supervision: Supervision for Quality Instruction directed by Eldonna L. Everetts, University of Illinois, for the State Department of Education for North Carolina and NCAE Divisions of Supervisors and Principals.

Problems facing teachers, supervisors and principals

Most of the current literature and development efforts separate the problems of teachers, supervisors and principals. Specialists among each group seem to think and talk only in terms of the uniqueness of the tasks of each. However, it seems much more reasonable--and constructive--to group them; especially since the object of their collective work can only be the same object--improvement of learning for students.

Problems of the three categories of professional personnel might be grouped into instructional arrangements, in-service development, resources, militancy and overspecialization.

1. Instructional arrangements. While a great deal could be said about this problem, much of it needn't be said because all educators are aware that this is the era of "doing your own thing"--either as individuals or by school systems; team-teaching, block or core courses, experimental programs, etc.

The fact that we do have underway many constructive programs is good. The confusion and variance involved in these efforts isn't so good. But, the worst thing about it all is that for the most part teachers, supervisors and principals study, reflect and plan for implementing programs as separatists--that is teachers work with teachers, supervisors with supervisors and principals with principals. By following such a myopic view of program implementation we will never make satisfactory progress. The matter of developing fruitful, different instructional arrangements must be a team effort--as you have in this setting--since the actual implementation must be a team effort. Only a like-minded team with the same perspective of the problem can plan adequate solutions.

2. In-service growth. For years we have been on the "in-service" kick!

Yet few school systems have a carefully planned, sequential and articulated system-wide plan for growth. Rather, they rely upon college and university courses and isolated specialized "one-shot" activities that leave some cold, some indifferent and some really excited about a course or plan. Yet, even those so motivated find it nigh impossible to do anything about what they learned because practically all of the efforts in the "one-shot" plans have been "beamed" at specialists (either by organization position or subject matter) who then cannot find enough other like-minded colleagues to get the show "on the road." Stimulating? Yes? Effective? Hardly!

Each system and maybe even each school within a system needs to develop--in writing--a plan for staff development which cuts across lines of specialization so that teams of people can make the whole at least equal to the sum of the parts--and most, if not all of the staff will in fact "grow" instead of having only five or ten percent "grow" through curriculum committees, workshops and college credit courses.

3. Resources. Instructional resources--through better funding--have multiplied in the last decade. Yet, resources are inadequate--as surely they always will be regardless of the level of funding if we have imaginative and dedicated people who really strive to do better work. Yet, if we are realistic we know that there are many ways to cooperatively use resources so that the "need for additional resources" does not become a shibboleth--a barrier--that keeps us from improving; which at the same time "tunes out" the public to our other statements of need that could be even more significant.

4. Militancy. Just a short time ago militancy in schools meant teacher militancy only. It implied that teachers were banding together against the presumed "tyrannies" of administrators and boards of education. Now, the very real militancy is that of students--primarily against the presumed "tyranny" of teachers. While this militancy started on the college campus, the pattern of evolution shows clearly that not only have high schools been affected but also junior high schools. Only the naive can believe that "it won't affect us" or that it won't spread in some form to elementary schools. And you surely know that there is a general development of tight-knit administrator groups--whose objects are clearly--and maybe justifiably--militancy or at least protection. Where it stops no one knows. It is reality and a serious problem for all involved. Teams of different-type specialists must lead the way out of this wilderness.
5. Overspecialization. Since 1958 and Sputnik I, we have been on the specialization kick. It started in higher education, spread to vocational education and high schools and then affected junior high schools (some junior high schools have majors and minors). It is even starting to appear in elementary schools. Most significantly, through teachers' own efforts in certification, standards, etc., it has almost completely permeated teaching and teacher preparation.

That depth of knowledge of subject is needed cannot be disputed. That overspecialization cripples the ability to teach children is also clear. However, there must be found a way to balance specialization with general education in order that people do not have to wait for middle age and relative financial success to be knowledgeable about many facets of life. The scientist needs to know the roots and significance of humanism.

The humanist needs some appreciation for and understanding of the nature and processes of science. This matter--overspecialization--could well be the darkest cloud above us--it could be the greatest problem facing education for the rest of this century!

The nature of the problem can be illustrated by the fact that there are few colleges or universities where one can get a liberal education. Rather than adhering to the venerated concept of a general education at a higher level, they have become academic "trade schools". With the advent of the much publicized "track-system" high schools started to become mirrors of the colleges. And so it goes! Who is going to reverse the tide?

This whole matter of overspecialization has lead to increased problems of articulation--vertically between the college and high schools, high school and junior highs and between junior highs and elementary and horizontally between the various subject fields. Unit level teachers know little about what is done and how at another unit level. English teachers know little and seem to care less about what and how much math is taught. One facet of the problem can be illustrated by the fact that one high school student carrying five subjects had what each of the five teachers assumed to be two hours of homework per day for his course. None of the teachers had any finite idea of how much other teachers were assigning!

The crucial problem of providing reasonable articulation must be solved. Delay can only further increase the credibility gap--between how well we say the schools do and what parents see as almost hopeless confusion--and even callousness to the needs of students. And we must find ways to make all teachers aware of the problem. Many are oblivious. In one school, at the end of extensive interviews on developmental programs in the school system, teachers were asked, "Whose problem is articulation?" Two answered "The speech therapist's."

Problem of schools and school districts

Schools and school districts as corporations have the above problems as inherent, in-house issues. In addition, they have problems which need cooperative leadership for resolution. Some of those problems germane to our topic are (1) adjusting to changing cultural values, (2) complex financial problems and (3) maintaining credibility with those who pay for the schools.

1. Changing cultural values. Not too long ago most Americans believed that schools were to educate not change the social order. They believed that students were to hear and not necessarily be heard and that they were to be of very proper conduct and dress. Now the converse is true. Society, partially through government leadership, demands that schools change the social order. And, students are going to see to it that they are heard--they may not even listen! As a colleague well said, "Everything nailed down is coming loose." Schools are being used as the primary tools of integration--and for forcing legal actions in the various realms of civil rights. By example (of teachers and others) students have learned that in union there is strength. And by their numbers they have the strongest union in America! They will be heard--and we will make adaptive changes! Student conduct in school is increasingly what they will--condoned by their parents. Good, bad or indifferent, those who wish for the "good old days" of loco parentis are doomed to frustration. Student dress is up for grabs! That is, no one is able to predict its nature of two years hence. However, we do know that the only student dress codes that are working are those in which students have a voice in determining!
2. Credibility (accountability). Schools and school people profess to much accomplishment--and rightly so! But many of the things we attribute to schools are increasingly questioned. Greater numbers of students and parents

wonder about our claims to "meeting individual needs and differences".

Many doubt our claims to coordinated efforts. Even greater numbers question the relevance of our teaching and it is abundantly clear through pools that many question the validity of our evaluation schemes--too many students successful at lower levels (elementary and secondary)--are unsuccessful at higher levels (secondary and college) and too many of our disillusioned and dropouts become outstanding successes! We need to either clarify our goals and procedures or explain them in a way that is plausible. This cannot be done only by the superintendent of schools! Reducing the credibility gap is a cooperative leadership project!

3. Finances. The crunch is here! Not only are public elementary and secondary schools in competition with vocational and higher education for the same dollars--they are also in direct competition with private and parochial schools, urban development, space exploration, etc., ad infinitum for the same dollars. In addition, with the megalopolises which span several states, having unequal financial abilities, new ways to distribute just the education money must be devised. There can be no doubt that one or more of these areas will suffer from the collision.

This problem is so complex that superintendents alone or even in concert with boards of education cannot possibly give adequate voice to the cause. Additional leadership must come from teachers, supervisors and principals. Simply stated, no longer can teachers assume that their sole role is to teach their grade or subject. Supervisors may no longer deal only with their specific supervision tasks and principals must not become or continue to be "school men" who deal only with "their" staff in a stereotyped way. They all must cooperatively work with others in the education enterprise in an effort to solve the total complex of problems faced.

Summary

Education isn't all that it could be! It is in a storm center! Some of the storm was foisted upon educators and the schools. Other elements have been generated within.

These problems--storm clouds--will not disappear by ignoring them. Playing ostrich may have been helpful at one time and under certain conditions. Today it isn't! Educators and schools must become a strong positive force in solving the problems--instead of being a part of it!

Several things can be done. None of those being proposed will alone produce a solution. Together, the following specific projects or processes may. At least they would help us avoid being a part of the problem. One proposal is to do the following--in somewhat the sequence listed.

1. Establish a cooperative leadership. A cooperative leadership pattern must emerge or be reestablished. The overall thrust of the effort would be to deal effectively with both the in-house problems and the external problems.

This leadership pattern would not be one where everyone tries to be everything to everybody! Instead it would be a process in which each educates himself about the problems and responsibilities of the others. For example, in terms of the teacher-supervisor-principal team, it means that each would begin to truly understand the problems and responsibilities of each of the others--and each would still serve his designated function. Teachers would teach--supervisors would supervise--and principals would administer. Each would serve a leadership role. But, each would broaden his concerns--sensitivities--so that he (she) could make a much greater contribution to the total process.

2. Clarify goals of schools. Under a cooperative leadership pattern it would be much easier to tackle the key question in education--why we do it! It appears today that too many--educators and interested others--spin their

wheels on the grounds of how we do it and what we do. True, these need to be clear, but decent answers to these questions are sterile unless each involved is unclear on or even oblivious to why we do what we do.

The schools do and should belong to the people. Their aspirations for the schools and for their children are just as important as are educators'. Good educators will seek to know and understand their aspirations and then blend them with their own in order that all understand what we do in terms of why.

In order to clarify school goals answers to many questions are needed. Among them are the following:

- a. Are the Educational Policies Commission purposes of education in American democracy valid for today?
 - b. If so, are we really doing the things needed to achieve them? If not, what need we do?
 - c. Do we believe that each type of and each student should specifically be served by the schools? Or only those going to college? Depending upon the answers to the above, what changes are needed to make us "honest"?
 - d. etc., etc., etc., etc.
3. Establish procedures (policies and regulations). Unless we clarify our goals and develop specific plans to achieve each we are not doing the job. All concerned parties need to work together to define the needed procedures. These procedures need to be circumspect in order that they can be applied to each field of learning rather than unique to a given field. Once that is done, we can work on those procedures and processes unique to a specialty.

4. Define the appropriate amounts of common and specialized learnings.

Fundamental skills and learnings are needed by all. Then some specialization can be added. However, these two elements need be developed in exactly that sequence--not vice versa as they seem to be. This whole concept needs careful restudy because we are rapidly moving to the reverse pattern. Education needs a careful definition of common learnings at all levels.

5. Establish a coordinated set of patterns for relating level to level and subject to subject. Articulation is the appropriate term for this step.

This development should deal with minimums and maximums (such as amount of knowledge, homework, communication, etc.).

6. In-service programs. Each system and each school should develop a written specific, developmental and articulated in-service program which addresses itself to that system (school) and its problems and weaknesses. Increasingly it is clear that while generic-type problems are similar from school (system) to school the volatile problems are unique--and the staff of that school (system) needs to have an in-service program which deals with those needs. These in-service programs should be designed to cut across lines of specialization. Teachers should work with administrators, English teachers should work with math teachers, etc., etc.

I am convinced, through a variety of experiences, that heterogeneous groups are clearly much more productive in in-service programs than homogeneous groups.

7. Educators should become community people. Changing values are difficult for "school-people" to fathom. That is educators who confine their interests and contacts to school and school people tend to be exposed to a limited range of values and cultural change. In order to better understand their clients (all varieties) they need to live with, not apart from them.

The alternatives seem clear. We may continue in education to keep school--to teach what we have been teaching, to ignore volatile change and attitudes about us--and rapidly decline as a major positive force in society. Or, we can rethink our goals, processes and problems in terms of community needs and aspirations and remain a strong force in society. There does not appear to be a middle ground.

If we choose the last, and we should, the only way we can be equal to the task is by working together--in cooperative leadership for education.